

PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION SERVICES (PICS)  
NIH - TASK ORDER

RFTOP#145      TITLE: National Library of Medicine's PubMed  
Web Site Usability Study

**PART I – REQUEST FOR TASK ORDER (TO) PROPOSALS**

**A. POINT OF CONTACT NAME:**

Point of Contact Name: Anthony Revenis

Phone: 301-402-3073      Fax: 301-435-6101

Proposal Address:

6011 Executive Blvd., Room 529S  
Rockville, MD 20892-7663

Billing Address:

Accounts Payable, OFM, NIH  
Bldg. 31; Rm. B1B39  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2045

**B. PROPOSED PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** To be completed 60 days  
from date of award.

**C. PRICING METHOD:** Firm Fixed Price – Firm should provide a single price.

Please describe the methods to be employed and the estimated number of  
employee hours required.

User demographics have been collected via an online survey conducted within the last  
year, and will be available to awarded vendor.

Currently available funding is limited to \$40,000. If, in the opinion of your firm,  
this is not a sufficient amount to conduct a thorough evaluation of fundamental aspects of  
PubMed, please specify how to best spend available funds, which tasks will remain  
undone, and the additional amounts necessary to complete the evaluation. If available  
funds are more than necessary, a lower proposed price will be reflected in the  
evaluation scores.

**D. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS:** Proposals should be submitted by e-mail. Please enter in the subject line the following text, "RFTOP# – Proposal from {insert your firm's name}." A signed task order form may be submitted electronically or will later be requested from the successful bidder.

**E. RESPONSE DUE DATE:** Proposals are due Monday, August 11, 2003 at 11:00 AM.

**F. TASK DESCRIPTION:** The MEDLARS Management Section (MMS) in the Bibliographic Services Division of the National Library of Medicine is seeking experts to perform a usability study to identify interface issues and recommend solutions for the web site [www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov).

The study will be designed to answer key questions relating to fundamental/basic use of PubMed such as:

- Are users able to comprehend the purpose of the PubMed web site?
- Does organization and navigation of the site enable effective and efficient access to the content?
- How clearly do users understand the meaning of labels, links, symbols, and site instructions for the Home page? Do users easily notice, use and understand the different aspects of the Limits feature?
- How clearly do users understand the meaning of labels and links for the pages that display search results? Do they navigate these pages with ease?
- Do users notice error messages? Do users interpret the message as helpful when the search gives no results?
- How well does the Help documentation address user's information needs? Does the Help documentation provide clear, concise information and terminology? What do users think of the organization, appearance and ease of use?

The contractor is not being asked to review functionality of the search engine or to analyze advanced features of the PubMed web site.

Answers to these questions will help determine the current level of user satisfaction with the web site (what is working well and what is not working well) and determine the design modifications that would achieve the highest degree of access and user satisfaction. The contractor will work closely with MMS to determine testing strategies appropriate to each area of study, and will provide MMS with opportunities to observe the testing sessions. The contractor will prepare an appropriate schedule of milestones and deliverables.

## **General Requirements**

The contractor shall provide professional usability testing expertise in the following tasks:

### **Task I. Recruitment**

The contractor will meet with the Project Officer and other MMS staff to discuss the user groups to be recruited for usability testing. A survey of visitors to the PubMed website reveals researchers and clinicians make up approximately 65% of the users. Also, the survey shows these two groups are repeat users. MMS would like to consider having researchers and clinicians comprise the user group to be tested for this task. An additional user group MMS would like to consider is librarians and other information specialists.

### **Task II. Usability Analysis**

The contractor shall perform usability research using industry standard methodologies.

### **Task III. Develop Usability Test Scripts**

The contractor shall work closely with the MMS to determine testing strategies.

The contractor will develop usability-testing scripts designed to answer the key questions. These testing scripts shall be reviewed and approved by the Project Officer.

### **Task IV. Perform Usability Tests**

Participants shall be asked to complete a number of predetermined tasks that require searching, navigation, and any other tasks appropriate for the web site. The contractor shall provide the Project Officer with the opportunity to sit in on testing sessions.

The contractor shall be able to perform usability testing at their site or at the National Cancer Institute's usability lab, which is available for no-charge to government agencies.

### **Deliverable I. Session Videotapes**

The contractor shall provide unedited videotapes of all of the sessions in VHS format. The contractor shall include on the videotape a brief opening oral or written statement detailing the date, time, location, and walk-through of the testing scenarios. Each videotape shall be labeled with identifying information: date, timeframe, location, and subject matter. Each videotape shall display a running time counter in order to capture elapsed clock time for each of the participants.

## Deliverable II. Assessment

The contractor shall provide a written report for each of the usability sessions. The report shall identify the heuristics used to perform the assessment and relate the findings to these heuristics. The contractor shall make specific recommendations for improved application design, navigation, and language. The report shall identify the strengths and weaknesses of the pages tested; and provide specific recommendations to make the application more usable. The report shall identify specific usability problems in the user interface and recommend changes that will improve usability. Recommendations for additional aspects of PubMed to undergo usability studies will also be included.

Reports shall be delivered to the Project Officer electronically in the current version of Microsoft Word or PowerPoint in use at the NLM, and in hardcopy.

## Deliverable III. Status Report

A weekly status report will be sent electronically by cob each Friday to the Project Officer.

## Deliverable IV. Final Report

Provide a final written report after completion of all tasks and prior to expiration of the period of performance to the Project Officer. Report shall contain a summary of all work performed during the contract period. The report shall discuss any problems encountered and the resolution of those problems as well as recommendations and conclusions based upon experience and the results obtained.

Report shall be delivered electronically in current version of Microsoft Word or PowerPoint in use at NLM, and in hardcopy.

## **Clearances**

All studies will be conducted in accordance with OMB regulations. No clearances are required.

## **G. EVALUATION FACTORS:**

To facilitate the evaluation of the proposal, the contractor shall submit its materials in two separate physical entities: 1) the technical proposal, and 2) the business proposal.

## **1. TECHNICAL**

The technical proposal should provide unpriced detail of labor hours and other direct costs but shall not contain prices. The technical proposal content shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

### **Understanding and Approach (weight 50)**

The proposal shall provide a clear, concise statement of the scope and purpose of the contract that demonstrates complete understanding of intent and requirements.

The proposal shall provide a work plan that specifies how each of the requirements in each of the tasks is to be accomplished, including scheduling of time and personnel.

### **Technical competence of staff/contractor (weight 30)**

The proposal shall describe contractor experience in Web site usability testing and analysis. Specifically, the contractor shall have experience in the following:

- Recruiting subjects from target populations
- Preparing and conducting task analysis studies
- Preparing and conducting paper prototype tests, if needed
- Preparing and conducting user interviews
- Recording and analyzing response data
- Evaluating health, medical or information-intensive sites
- Preparing *clear and concise* reports and presentations from the response data
- Making recommendations for modifications to web page layouts, navigation schemes and site language.

The proposal shall specify how the professional personnel employed under the contract will organizationally operate. The name, title and experience of the project manager shall be provided.

The contractor shall accommodate persons with disabilities either at their site or at the person's home or office. The contractor shall be familiar with hardware and software used by persons with disabilities. The contractor shall be familiar with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and its application to electronic media and web sites.

Even though a Text Version of PubMed is available for users who require special adaptive equipment to access the Web, this study shall not include the Text Version of PubMed.

**Past Experience (weight 20)**

The proposal shall list recent contractor experience in Web site usability testing and analysis. The proposal shall demonstrate sufficient contractor experience and knowledge to assure rapid and thorough execution of the tasks.

**2. PRICE**

While price will not be the most important evaluation factor, proposed prices will be considered in determining the firm that represents the best value to the government.

**TO # NICS-145**

**TITLE:** National Library of Medicine's PubMed Web Site Usability Study

**PART II - CONTRACTOR'S REPLY: CONTRACT #263-01-D-0\_\_\_\_\_**

**Contractor:**

**Points of Contact:**

**Phone-**

**Fax-**

**Address:**

**TOTAL ESTIMATED COST:**

**Pricing Method:** FFP

**TOTAL ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOURS:**

**PROPOSED COMPLETION DATE:**

**FOR THE CONTRACTOR:**\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date

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**SOURCE SELECTION:**

WE HAVE REVIEWED ALL SUBMITTED PROPOSALS HAVE DETERMINED  
THIS FIRM SUBMITTED THE BEST OVERALL PROPOSAL AND THE  
PRICE/COST IS REASONABLE.

**Billing Reference #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appropriations Data:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RECOMMENDED:**

FAX #

Signature - Project Officer

Date

**APPROVED:**\_\_\_\_\_

FAX #

Signature - Contracting Officer

Date

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**NIH APPROVAL -**

CONTRACTOR SHALL NOT EXCEED THE ESTIMATED LABOR HOURS OR ESTIMATED TASK ORDER  
AMOUNT WITHOUT THE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF THE CONTRACTING OFFICER & PICS  
COORDINATOR

**APPROVED:**\_\_\_\_\_

FAX 5-6101

Signature –Anthony M. Revenis, J.D., NIH-PICS Coordinator

Date

